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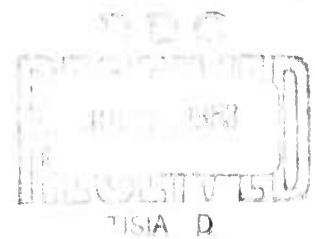
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KREMLIN THOUGHTS: YIELDING,
REBUFFING, PROVOKING, RETREATING

Nathan Leites

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PREPARED FOR:

THE OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
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The **RAND** Corporation
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NO. OTS

MEMORANDUM

RM-3618-ISA

MAY 1963

**KREMLIN THOUGHTS: YIELDING,
REBUFFING, PROVOKING, RETREATING**

Nathan Leites

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PREFACE

The points to be developed below concerning Soviet leaders' feelings and attitudes towards their Western counterparts are derived from an analysis of the utterances of Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders from 1957 to December 12, 1962, when Khrushchev gave his public retrospect on the Cuban crisis. The author consulted Pravda, Kommunist, the verbatim records of the Party congresses, and the volumes in which Khrushchev's public statements on foreign affairs are collected.

This Memorandum deals with Soviet statements that have already been subjected to close scrutiny by many specialists; hence some things that appear below have already been said. Still, it may be useful to organize the material as it has not yet, to the author's knowledge, been presented.

How much can be inferred -- and how? -- about the genuine feelings and calculations of the rulers of the Soviet Union from their public declarations? This question is being increasingly debated and is one to which no satisfactory set of general answers seems yet to have been given. It may be worthwhile to develop guesses even on such dubious evidence as public declarations, provided these guesses are accepted as such and checked against more reliable indicators: actual conduct and attitudes expressed in less public contexts.

In preparing this paper, the author has made liberal use of the present tense in order to stress the immediacy and continuity of Soviet thinking as reflected in public statements. Dating of the statements is provided by

footnotes where practicable. The terms "Bolshevik" and "Soviet" have been used almost interchangeably, since the intent of the study is to relate present Soviet statements to traditional Bolshevik conceptions. As will be noted, current Soviet attitudes and images have not evolved far from their Bolshevik antecedents.

SUMMARY

Insights about Soviet attitudes towards Western pressures, Western actions, Western reactions to Soviet initiatives, and Western successes are hard to come by. Fortunately, Soviet leaders are copious talkers. Analysis of Soviet statements is one of the few means available for throwing light on Soviet attitudes and self-images. This study addresses itself to Soviet statements on four closely related themes: yielding to enemies, rebuffing enemies, provoking enemies, and retreating before enemies. It attempts to illuminate our understanding of the psychological implications of these themes in the Soviet decision-making process.

The political literature of early Bolshevism contained many hints that Bolsheviks questioned their capacity to engage effectively in political struggle against domestic and international opponents. They apparently feared certain deep-seated predispositions in their own personalities, against which they felt they had to struggle. These concerns of the early Soviet leaders were analyzed in the author's A Study of Bolshevism, a RAND Corporation research study published by the Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., in 1953. More recent, and even contemporary, statements and writings of Soviet leaders continue to reflect fears of this kind, though not always to the extent exhibited formerly.

For the man who seeks to understand whether or not Soviet spokesmen mean what they say, the apparent conflicts among the four Soviet themes discussed in this paper can be quite disturbing. Exhortations not to yield

to enemies are followed by warnings that one should always be prepared to retreat. Statements that the Soviet Union should quickly rebuff enemy threats are linked with caveats against provoking the enemy to an attack. Where is real meaning to be found in this welter of apparent contradictions?

First, the themes are less contradictory than they sound. Retreating is different by definition from yielding: One can retreat without yielding. Rebuffing an enemy is not necessarily provoking him, though both can go together.

Second, these themes play an important part in structuring the Soviet leaders' image of themselves as a determined but controlled, forward-moving but cautious, elite group that plays an essential role in the world.

Third, meaning can be perceived as existing in tension between apparent opposites. For example, the psychologist's expression, 'love-hate relationship,' is perfectly meaningful to us, even though it involves the juxtaposition of opposites. Similarly, the interplay of these Soviet themes can convey meaning, particularly as one develops a "feel" for the weight being given to a particular theme at a given moment in time.

On the theme "yielding to an opponent," the present Soviet leaders make many statements expressing anxiety. They seem to perceive in themselves a tendency to yield to opponents. They even attribute to the West the intent of playing upon this predisposition. Soviet reiterations that they will never yield can thus be interpreted as mechanisms of reassurance, as incantations against self-perceived inner tendencies.

Since talk of any concession is suspect, because it implies Soviet capitulation, "rebuffing an enemy" is another important theme. Soviet leaders express the feeling that enemy threats must be quickly rebuffed lest weaknesses in the Soviet position be revealed and jeopardize hard-won gains. To the Soviet leaders of the past, it has appeared essential to counteract any undesirable development at its very inception lest the situation deteriorate rapidly and irresistibly. Today's Soviet leaders, however, seem somewhat less fearful than their predecessors that an unsatisfactory situation will go sour quickly and completely, and more confident in their ability to prevent a minor setback from assuming major proportions.

The injunction to guard against any tendency to "yield" to an opponent and to "rebuff" him has to be reconciled in practice, however, with the conflicting "fear of provoking the enemy," a theme frequently encountered in Soviet statements. If Bolshevik leaders fear their dispositions towards weakness, they are also apprehensive of being rash. While the present Soviet leaders may be less given to anxiety than their predecessors, and while the increase in their resources may make a forward policy appear less risky to them, recent statements reveal great awareness of countervailing factors. Implicit or explicit in Soviet statements are considerations justifying caution: the perils deriving from the new military technology; Moscow's chronic inferiority to Washington in nuclear-weapons delivery capability; and the danger of war entailed by their interpretation of capitalism as an aging and dying social-economic system that may make a last, desperate gamble to save itself.

The conflict between "never yielding" and "rebuffing" on the one hand and "retreating" on the other is more apparent than real, for retreating is regarded as a 'normal' activity under certain conditions. Soviet statements portray retreating as a tactic to be cultivated. Retreating is not necessarily seen as the result of prior mistakes, but as an act of preservation, as a condition of future advance. Not to retreat is sometimes seen as "stupid," "yielding to provocation," "provoking," or any combination of the three. Retreating may prove dedication, realism, control, flexibility, skill, farsightedness. For a retreat to be indubitably "necessary," it must be preceded by the utmost effort to avoid it, including public statements opposing it. What distinguishes a retreat from "yielding" is that it is made necessary by the enemy's successful application of his strength. Retreats should be made as late as possible and not before the moment when further stubbornness might become damaging.

As is to be expected from men who have survived in a socio-political structure in which a man pays a high price for error, the statements of Soviet elite members are highly equivocal, sounding at the same time timid and bold, hortatory and cautionary. To the extent that these themes and the feelings associated with them operate in the decision-making process, we can expect Soviet policy to be probing and exploratory, but essentially conservative and ready to withdraw in the face of hostile determination. The validity of this hypothesis, however, is to be measured by actual Soviet performance in international confrontations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is indebted for criticisms and suggestions to Bernard Brodie, Alexander L. George, Fred C. Iklé, Myron Rush, and Colonel William A. Stewart.

ABBREVIATIONS

- K 57 N. S. Khrushchev, Za prochnyi mir i mirnoe sosushchestvovanie (For a Stable Peace and Peaceful Coexistence), Moscow, 1958.
- K 58 N. S. Khrushchev, K pobede v mirnom sorevnovanii s kapitalizmom (Towards Victory in Peaceful Competition with Capitalism), Moscow, 1959.
- K 59 I, II N. S. Khrushchev, Mir bez oruzhii, mir bez vojn (A World without Weapons, a World without War), Vols. 1, 2, Moscow, 1960.
- K 60 I, II N. S. Khrushchev, O vneshnei politike Sovetskogo Soiuza (On the Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union), Vols. 1, 2, Moscow, 1961.
- XXIst Congress Vneocherednoi XXI S'ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza, stenograficheskii otchet (Extraordinary XXI Congress of the CPSU, stenographic report), Vols. 1, 2, Moscow, 1959.
- XXIIInd Congress XXII S'ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soiuza, stenograficheskii otchet (XXII Congress of the CPSU, stenographic report), Vols. 1, 2, 3, Moscow, 1962.
- Materials Materialy XXII S'ezda KPSS (Materials relating to the XXII Congress of the CPSU), Moscow, 1961.
- Study Nathan Leites, A Study of Bolshevism, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1953.
- Ritual Nathan Leites and Elsa Bernaut, Ritual of Liquidation, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1953.

Styles

Nathan Leites, Styles in Negotiation:
East and West on Arms Control, 1958-
1961, The RAND Corporation, RM-2838-ARPA,
November 1961, (For Official Use Only).

Where a quotation is given without attribution, the words
are Khrushchev's.

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I. YIELDING

Under this heading are brought together statements of Soviet leaders on the theme of not yielding to enemies. Lenin said in 1913 that the Party must oppose 'the crass submissiveness of man.' In 1959, at the XXIst Party Congress, local Party leader Denisov appears to express defensive feelings on this point when he says:

One cannot say that the...members of the anti-Party group have drawn the correct conclusions from the resolution of the Party's Central Committee. For instance, Comrade Shepilov continues to slander...the Soviet intelligentsia.

He affirms that instability is inherent in the intelligentsia and that he, too, "as a Russian intelligent" is not exempt from that instability."¹

But does Khrushchev wholly disagree with Shepilov? Khrushchev himself cites the "Russian merchants" who 'put mustard on the lips of their lackeys, and the lackeys said 'Thanks' and bowed low."² Khrushchev goes further. Bitterly envisaging the eager inclination to offer an enemy all he wants -- "going to bow before him, capitulating" -- Khrushchev insists that he will never engage in such conduct. "We are not taking our hats off to you;³...you are going to wait in vain for a situation

¹Denisov, Vol. 2, p. 314.

²K 60 I, pp. 556-557.

³K 59 II, p. 210.

in which we will lie prone before you and surrender to your mercy."⁴ "Is it for us," Khrushchev asks, 'to bend our back, to offer the enemy a deep salute? Whoever would do this, or even merely think of this, that person is no son of his people, no hero of his people. He is crawling like a snake, rather than flying like an eagle."⁵

A related disposition that Soviet people appear to see in themselves is just to suffer the enemy's attack, to resign oneself to it; or even to agree with it; or perhaps to enjoy it. Khrushchev may express his apprehension about such tendencies by portraying the enemy as taking them for granted: "The imperialists are accustomed to act [towards the Soviet Union] as did Russian merchants of old' toward their lackeys."⁶ Or Khrushchev may attribute the penchant he fears to the enemy himself. "With what eyes," he asks, after the first "versions' of the U-2 flight offered by the United States have been refuted, "can the authors of these versions look out on the world after their exposure? Don't worry, they won't feel too badly. We know what kinds of eyes imperialists have. As the saying goes, one spits into their eye, and they affirm that it's God's dew."⁷

But Khrushchev himself is repeatedly preoccupied with rejecting this advice in favor of the opposite reaction. "We cannot and shall not," he announces in 1959, "act according to the commandment which says: If they hit you

⁴K 58, p. 261.

⁵K 58, p. 223.

⁶K 60 I, pp. 556-557.

⁷K 60 I, p. 542.

on the left cheek, tender the right one. We shall act in human fashion, and when they hit us on the left cheek, we shall give them such a repulse that they will thereupon lose the inclination to do this."⁸ "...I am not in agreement with him [Christ] when he says: If your left cheek is hit, offer the right one. I hold another principle: If I am hit on the left, then I shall deliver such a blow on the right that the head of the aggressor won't stay on his shoulders." 'Now,' Khrushchev concludes, 'you see in what my disagreement with Christ consists.'"⁹

Russians see the enemy, however, as appallingly confident that the Soviet temptation to submit to him will win out. 'Mr. Eisenhower,' Khrushchev notes in 1957, 'tries in a number of cases to treat us as if we were his satellites, ready to submit to him in everything.'"¹⁰

'Maybe,' he advances in 1959, 'the Western powers have fallen victim to their own self-confidence: They may believe themselves to be so strong that they are capable of imposing any conditions on other governments.'"¹¹

In an even more disturbing fashion, the West is seen as counting on the Party to help in its own undoing.¹² Such calculations are envisaged as sometimes proving correct in relations between enemies: "Formerly Germany attempted to subjugate France by war, and now the French

⁸K 59 II, pp. 386-387.

⁹K 60 I, p. 325.

¹⁰To James Reston, K 57, p. 205.

¹¹K 59 I, p. 409.

¹²Styles, Section VI.

political leaders themselves help the Western Germans aiming at a revanche to realize their aspirations."¹³

As to the Soviet Union, the Western powers "want us to go so far as to help them in the realization of these... intentions." "Isn't that a bit thick?" adds Khrushchev.¹⁴ "Evidently," he observes on another occasion about the enemy, "they count on...success in imposing their will on us and on our lending them assistance in this."¹⁵

In the face of such apprehensions, Soviet speakers proclaim that they will never yield. "If," declares Khrushchev about certain speeches of Western leaders, "they were made for the purpose of exercising pressure on us, this was of course doomed to failure, because the Soviet Government and the Soviet people do not succumb to pressure."¹⁶ Attributing to the opponent the intention of "extorting unilateral concessions from the Soviet Union" at an impending conference, Khrushchev assures foe and friend that "nothing will come of it." "Let those," he insists, "who cherish such plans know that they will see them accomplished as little as they will ever look at their ears."¹⁷

That the West's aspirations to deal with Moscow "from a position of strength" evoke such intense bad feeling may in part be due to what Bolshevik leaders take to be an implied reliance on their "lack of steadfastness."

¹³K 59 I, p. 344.

¹⁴K 59 I, p. 75.

¹⁵K 59 I, p. 111.

¹⁶K 60 I, p. 607.

¹⁷K 60 I, p. 503.

The point is all the more sensitive since the Bolsheviks' own code requires them to retreat to any extent rendered necessary by the enemy's "position of strength."¹⁸

In the Soviet view, a withdrawal is "yielding" if it is not really made necessary by the enemy's successful application of his strength; if it is necessary, it is called a justified 'retreat.' Before the decision is made, before the enemy's pressure has become indisputable, there is always a question for the Soviets whether envisaging a concession is forbidden ustupat (yielding) or required otstupat (retreating) -- to use the Kremlin's probable internal language. The difference in evaluation is as fine and as crucial as that in the language. After Cuba, for example, Khrushchev claims that he has made a "reasonable concession" (ustupka), but that there has been no otstuplenie. It is interesting in itself that Khrushchev somehow reverses the normal Bolshevik usage of the two words.

A variety of themes are employed in Soviet efforts to steel themselves against the temptation to yield.

In public, Soviet leaders may permit their feelings to intrude: "We cannot," declares Khrushchev at the time of the U-2 incident, "reconcile ourselves to this aggressive act; we have our pride and our own dignity. We represent a mighty socialist government."¹⁹ They seem to be saying that, in the past, when they were weak as children, it might have been necessary for them to retreat

¹⁸ Study, Chap. XIX, and Section IV below.

¹⁹ K 60 I, pp. 556-557.

before an enemy attack; to do so now, when they have become strong adults, would be yielding.

"A group of governments of the imperialist camp," Khrushchev explains to the General Assembly, "exploits the apparatus of the Secretariat of the U.N. in their interests. They have used it against the Congo. They may try to use it against us. Against the Congo it was possible to use it, for this young government does not have forces. But against us it is not possible to use it, for we do have forces."²⁰ And never again, the Soviet leaders seem to be telling themselves, shall we lack them through either false morality or true stupidity. "We should not like," Khrushchev tells a foreign journalist, "to resemble the lamb facing the world without defense." "We do not," he insists, "like to be in the position of the lamb."²¹ "We would not," he repeats later, "like to be simpletons whom one could take with naked hands."²²

Soviet leaders exhort themselves not to permit fear to overwhelm them, a fate which they see as a major objective of their enemy. "We have strong nerves;" hence, "let the American imperialists who want to influence us by frightening us look in other countries for other people who yield to fright; they will have no influence on us."²³ In fact, "it is impossible to make us bend."²⁴

Concurrently with this line, Soviet leaders maintain that it is their enemy himself who is frightened. While

²⁰K 60 II, pp. 512-513.

²¹K 57, p. 93.

²²K 58, p. 537.

²³K 60 I, p. 571.

²⁴loc. cit., p. 560.

"the imperialists have more than once attempted to frighten us," though "we are not susceptible to fear, it is not we who tremble, but it is rather the capitalist world which trembles before the world of socialism."²⁵

At other times, Soviet leaders appear to be saying that, since they are little frightened, they cannot be fooled or persuaded. Noting in 1961 that "some political figures in the West want to center the negotiations [concerning Berlin] on the question of the consolidation or 'improvement' of the occupation regime in West Berlin," Khrushchev exclaims: "Do they really believe that they will persuade us to accept such an unenviable role?"²⁶

Any needless withholding of retaliation, as well as any unnecessary concession, tends to be felt by Bolsheviks as "capitulation." When after the U-2 incident "the United States [attempted to justify, a governmental policy of espionage flights over the territories of other governments," Khrushchev declares, "what was there for us to do?" Expressing the logic of the excluded middle, Khrushchev holds that not to "repulse such flights" would have been "to surrender."²⁷ Eisenhower, on the other hand, having announced that there would be no more U-2 flights for the rest of the year, "we were told: What do you want, you got satisfaction!" "But," Khrushchev replies, this is the manner of a lackey. If the lord gives the lackey a smack on his mug, and then gives him a fiver,

²⁵ K 58, p. 535.

²⁶ Speech of December 9, 1961. Pravda, December 10, 1961.

²⁷ K 60 II, p. 502

the lackey will immediately say: Thanks, at your service, my benefactor!''²⁸

The equation between concession and capitulation may assume more tangible shape. Envisaging, in 1957, the possibility that at a summit meeting 'certain participants were to strive to obtain some political concessions from us,' Khrushchev explains: "By political concessions, they would almost understand the liquidation of Soviet society in the U.S.S.R., as well as the liquidation of the social-economic conquests which have been accomplished in the countries of people's democracy."²⁹ To be sure, Khrushchev does not believe this; but that he feels it expedient to say so may be related to the sense of an identity between 'yielding' (ustupat'), a verb related to the ustupki -- concessions -- of which Khrushchev is speaking) and 'surrendering.' 'To accept the current proposals of the Western powers on..., ' Soviet spokesmen may say in many a situation, 'would mean a full capitulation...to their demands.'³⁰ This tautology acquires richness from the equation between 'accepting proposals' and 'capitulation.' 'To accept the conditions of the imperialist governments (on almost any issue) means to put oneself at their mercy.'³¹

* * * * *

As far as Bolshevik harshness in dealing with the West is related to a fear of yielding to it, the themes

²⁸K 60 I, pp. 612-613.

²⁹K 57, p. 329.

³⁰K 59 I, p. 123.

³¹Speech of May 18, 1962. Pravda, May 19, 1962.

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surveyed in this section scarcely give grounds for assuming a change.

II. REBUFFING

Under this heading come Soviet statements calculated to shore up Soviet determination not to yield, by sharply rebuffing any threats. Bolsheviks insist upon the need to suppress any disposition to suffer an attack without resisting or counterattacking.³²

Passivity in the face of attack or pressure is viewed by Soviet leaders as "impossible." In the domain of words, for example, Khrushchev says, "I view it as impossible to remain silent when...",³³ or "I cannot leave without an answer...."³⁴

In Soviet eyes, the "repulse" should be if possible "decisive," "crushing," "annihilating." "To every pressure," alleges Khrushchev in 1960, "we respond by a decisive repulse."³⁵

"Every provocation," Khrushchev maintains, "should be met."³⁶ He considers none too small. "I am ready," he announces at a press conference abroad, "to answer bad questions with a counterattack."³⁷ "Once," he recalls after a trip beyond the border, "when we were traveling through Austria in a bus, there stood at the side of the road near a car an aged couple. Evidently they were tourists from Western Germany of whom there are many in

³²Study, Chap. XVIII.

³³K 59 II, p. 194.

³⁴K 59 II, p. 414.

³⁵K 60 I, p. 609.

³⁶K 60 II, p. 208.

³⁷K 60 I, p. 277.

Austria. When the man saw me, he showed me a fairly heavy fist. I considered that I must answer him, that I must not pass by without paying attention to this. I also showed him my fist."³⁸

When something undesirable appears, Soviet leaders consider it essential to exterminate it right away, even though it be tiny:³⁹ One must "mercilessly cut off the smallest attempts to...",⁴⁰ "cut off the development of such tendencies,"⁴¹ "cut them off at the root,"⁴² or "root out the smallest relapse."⁴³

If, in the Soviet view, one fails to do so, catastrophe impends; or so at least the Russian feels free to allege without feeling silly: "It is clear to everybody that this is only the beginning. Those who entered upon the path of...are not going to stop at the half-way mark."⁴⁴ "Think of what would have happened," explains Khrushchev, "if we had sat down to negotiate" on May 16, 1960, in Paris "without having received an apology from the United States. This would have signified that we recognize the legality of the espionage flights over the Soviet Union. To what would this have led? The aggressors would have wanted to bend us. But if we had bent

³⁸K 60 II, pp. 182-183.

³⁹Study, Chap. XVIII.

⁴⁰History, p. 462.

⁴¹K 57, p. 197.

⁴²K 58, p. 486.

⁴³Illichev, Pravda, December 27, 1961.

⁴⁴K 47, p. 165.

our back, they would immediately have thrown a saddle on us, and then they would have sat themselves on top of us and begun to drive us on." And, of course, 'this is what they wanted' in the first place.⁴⁵

If the Soviet Union renounced the conclusion of a peace treaty with Eastern Germany, Khrushchev predicted in 1961, the Western powers 'would view this as a strategic breakthrough, and they would immediately enlarge the circle of their demands. They would ask for the liquidation of the socialist structure in the German Democratic Republic.' Now 'if they were to obtain this, then, of course, they would put before themselves the task of tearing out of Poland and Czechoslovakia those areas which were returned to them by the Potsdam agreement.' Again, 'if the Western powers were to succeed in this..., then they would come forward with their main aspiration -- the liquidation of socialism in all countries of the socialist camp.' And 'that is why one must not defer the solution of the questions concerning the peace treaty.'⁴⁶

'It is well known,' writes Khrushchev to Bertrand Russell two days after the outbreak of the Cuban crisis, and the same number of days before his retreat, 'that if one tries to appease a bandit by first giving him one's purse, then one's coat, and so forth, he is not going to be more charitable because of this, he is not going to stop exercising banditry. On the contrary, he will become

⁴⁵K 60 I, p. 626.

⁴⁶Speech of August 8, 1961. Pravda, August 9, 1961.

ever more insolent."⁴⁷ Clearly, Soviet leaders feel the enemy is as much wedded to the principle of pursuit as is the Party.

According to the Soviet leaders, when counteraction is applied right at the start, the course of events is different. "I believe," says Khrushchev about the prospects of a test ban shortly after the U-2 incident, "that the American imperialists have begun to see better, because they have been rubbing their eyes in the Sverdlovsk region. An agreement on this question becomes possible."⁴⁸

"Gentlemen," Khrushchev addresses foreign journalists, "you have all had mothers, for otherwise you would not have arrived in this world. I well remember my mother." Now "my mother rarely had the opportunity to buy cream. But once, when it happened that there was cream on our table, the cat lapped it up. My mother took the cat by the ears, pulled it about, and dipped its nose into the remaining cream. Then she pulled it about once more, and pulled its nose into the cream once again. Thus she taught the cat who had gone where he was not permitted to." Later he tells us: "Around the mine where I grew up, when a cat was caught which had gone into the pigeon house, it was seized by the tail and thrown to the ground from the pigeon house. After this, the cat understood better the lesson it had been taught."⁴⁹

* * * * *

⁴⁷October 24, 1962. Pravda, October 25, 1962.

⁴⁸K 60 I, p. 562.

⁴⁹K 60 I, pp. 563-566.

It would not seem that the classic Bolshevik injunction to rebuff the enemy has lost any of its force. Bolshevik leaders may have increased their ability to perceive that a small undesirable event or trend will not always grow to enormous size if left to itself.

Starting to discuss Yugoslavia in late 1962, Khrushchev is conventional. "It is natural," he recalls, "that every Communist party...strives to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism in creative fashion to the concrete... conditions of its country." But then Khrushchev's discourse becomes novel: "It is understandable that there can...be no complete uniformity [among Communist parties] in the understanding of all questions. Differences in the understanding of concrete questions regarding the construction of socialism, differences in approach towards this or that question are not excluded." Indeed, "if we," the Soviet Party and the Yugoslav Party, "have as yet no common understanding on some questions, this does not at all mean that we must build our relations on the basis of the remnants of disagreements." To be sure, "we are told (by the dogmatists) that it would be harmful to have good governmental and economic relations with the Yugoslavs until such time as some ideological divergences with the Communist Union of Yugoslavia will have been entirely eliminated." But, "this is simply stupid." For "even the imperialists strive to overcome and to smooth out their contradictions...."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Speech of December 12, 1962. Pravda, December 13, 1962.

The changes implied in the above statements are striking. In the Bolshevik tradition "remnants" is a dread word, implying a need to eliminate divergences "entirely," while the phrase "to smooth out" is traditionally a contemptible and enfeebling petty-bourgeois purpose. The only legitimate -- and, indeed, mandatory -- differences of conduct adopted by Communist parties in different times and places were, in the older view, not genuine divergences at all, although Khrushchev now to some extent admits them to be such. It was merely a matter of applying the same principles of conduct to diverse conditions; and on this kind of diversity-by-rule unanimity was required. Today this requirement is qualified.

III. PROVOKING

This Section deals with Soviet statements expressing caution about provoking enemies. Bolshevik leaders, as has been noted, fear their dispositions towards weakness. But they are also apprehensive of being rash. Being rash includes allowing oneself to be "provoked" by the enemy and "provoking" him. For obvious reasons, the former is more eligible for public mention than the latter.

'The Soviet Government,' Khrushchev assures Bertrand Russell, and perhaps himself, the day after the American quarantine around Cuba has been established, 'will not let itself be provoked by the...actions of the United States of America'⁵¹ -- an argument that Khrushchev is likely to have used to persuade those of his colleagues who proposed resistance. To them he may also have pointed out that their course meant "provoking" the Strategic Air Command.

For Bolsheviks, their own potential recklessness is just as frightening as the enemy's.⁵² At the same time, the extreme dangers to Soviet final objectives associated with the possibility of "madness winning out," even for a moment, in the enemy camp enhances Soviet apprehensions of "provoking" the opponent. As noted above, Soviet leaders are understandably mute in public on this. They are similarly silent about a powerful intimate theme of earlier Bolshevism, which is unlikely to have vanished

⁵¹October 24, 1962. Pravda, October 25, 1962.

⁵²Study, Chap-XX.

though it may have been weakened: the apprehension that all one's loving care bestowed on a cherished object -- the Party, the Soviet Union -- may only result in harming, even in killing it.⁵³

But the classic Bolshevik requirement of caution has been applied by Khrushchev to the new fact of nuclear weapons to enunciate a well-known point that stands in contrast to certain earlier, strongly held tenets. Whereas Bolshevism, like other variants of Marxism, used to deny the existence of any "common interest" whatsoever in a "class society," Khrushchev discovers (for Foreign Affairs) the presence of one such bond in the world of today, because "on the scale of contemporary technology our planet is not so large; it has even become... crowded."

From this follows an unusual assimilation of the supremely political to the humbly nonpolitical: "If it is important in everyday life in a thickly settled locality to maintain normal relations with one's neighbors, it is" -- by implication, a novel event of the mid-20th century -- "even more indispensable...to do so in the relations between governments. Your neighbor may please you or may not please you. You are not obliged to become friends with him and visit him. However, you live side by side, and what is there to do if neither you nor he wants to leave your habitat and move to another city? Even more so in relations between governments. It will be unreasonable to assume that one can make life so

⁵³Ritual, Chapters 2, 4, 11.

unbearable for one's neighbor that he will decide to move, say, to Mars or to Venus. Or the other way around." Thus, 'whether you like your neighbor or whether you don't like him, there is nothing to be done about it, it is necessary somehow to come to terms with him' because 'our planet is one.'⁵⁴ In earlier Bolshevik thought, any statement to the effect that different "classes" could have 'one' objective was viewed as an affirmation of "bourgeois ideology."

In what sense, the Western observer may ask himself, are such ostensibly un-Marxist allegations an advance on the wholesale adoption by Communist parties in and out of power, ever since 1935, of innumerable pre-Bolshevik concepts like 'sovereignty' and the 'inviolability of treaties?' The point in these previous adoptions of non-Marxist concepts is, precisely, to use the very words to which others are attached, so as to attract them. In the present instance Khrushchev makes a statement which, to be sure, was stressed by his opponents before he took it up, but which he makes his own by putting it in his own words.

"Which side was victorious, who won?" Khrushchev asks after the Cuban crisis, and answers: "Here one can say that reason won, that the cause of peace and of the security of the peoples won" -- a good instance of the Bolsheviks' incessant and massive use of respectable rhetoric that carries little conviction. But then Khrushchev becomes more impressive. Asking the Supreme Soviet to "imagine for a moment what might have happened if we

⁵⁴K 59 II, pp. 44-45.

had behaved like thickheaded politicians and refused mutual concessions," he explains: "The situation might have been similar to one described in a tale. Two goats met on a little bridge above an abyss. Pressing against each other with their foreheads, they refused to give each other the right of way. As is known, they both tumbled down into the abyss. Is it reasonable for human beings to behave this way?"⁵⁵

* * * * *

Such innovations apart, the requirement of caution is repeated in conventional fashion. "There are facts and conditions," it is appropriate to say, "which force us to approach these questions with great caution."⁵⁶ "In international affairs," Khrushchev informs a Western correspondent, "one must show endurance and patience."⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, "I have lots of patience,"⁵⁸ and again: "Don't hurry, the wind does not blow in your face."⁵⁹

If a certain advance is not going to occur soon, Soviet leaders tell themselves, it will come about later. "I shall not try to divine when that time will arrive," Khrushchev will say about a desired prospect, "but we are not in a hurry. We shall wait."⁶⁰ "The French waged war

⁵⁵ Speech of December 12, 1962. Pravda, December 13, 1962.

⁵⁶ K 58, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Pravda, September 10, 1961.

⁵⁸ K 59 I, p. 188.

⁵⁹ K 59 I, p. 177.

⁶⁰ K 59 I, p. 316.

in Vietnam for seven years," recalls Khrushchev in 1962, when American activity in that area was increasing.

"Perhaps the Americans will wage war there even longer. But one can say one thing: they will be forced to leave.... One may even say, not that they will leave, but that they will be made to leave.... This is only a question of time."⁶¹

Soviet leaders reiterate that time is working for them: "We shall patiently wait for better times, and events are unfolding in such a fashion that these better times will undoubtedly come."⁶² "This will not escape us," Khrushchev assures his audience on one of the several occasions when he is annulling a deadline (this time concerning West Berlin). "Let us wait, and it will ripen further."⁶³

"It will ripen" if the Party undertakes maximum activity, according to a related Soviet theme. "Sending this message," Khrushchev writes to Macmillan on arms control in 1962, "I am asking myself what your reaction is going to be. Are you going to accept our proposals? Let me tell you candidly that I do not believe that you will.... Evidently the time is not yet ripe.... But this does not mean that we shall weaken in our efforts.... No, we shall continue to fight. Finally the people will understand that.... But for this time is needed, and patience is needed. Patience we have. As far as time is concerned, we shall try to hasten its flow. We shall

⁶¹Speech of May 18, 1962. Pravda, May 19, 1962.

⁶²K 58, p. 179.

⁶³K 60 I, p. 590.

not sit with folded arms and passively wait; we shall make all efforts...."⁶⁴ But always, Bolsheviks tell themselves, 'we must clearly see that the struggle...will be a protracted one.'⁶⁵

That the Party is better able to wait than its enemy is seen by Soviet thinkers as both a cause and an effect of its rise and of the enemy's decline. 'We are moving up.... Why then shouldn't we be patient? Patience gets exhausted in a man when the water reaches his neck; he has already reached the limit of his patience. I think there is no need to point my finger at anybody.'⁶⁶

* * * * *

Behind Soviet praise of patience lie apprehensions about the damages which the Soviet activist will inflict on himself if he lacks it. At the least, 'if you make haste, you'll be a laughing stock,'⁶⁷ or: 'if one admits haste, this may lead to undesirable consequences.'⁶⁸ 'Vladimir Il'ich Lenin,' Khrushchev recalls in 1961, 'said that in questions of economy' -- but is Khrushchev not also thinking of Berlin? -- 'one must not act by sudden swoops, 'in Red Army attack fashion,' that what is needed is a cautious, considered approach without haste or precipitation.'⁶⁹

⁶⁴ April 12, 1962. Pravda, April 14, 1962.

⁶⁵ K 59 II, p. 341.

⁶⁶ K 59 II, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁷ K 59 I, p. 265.

⁶⁸ K 59 I, p. 210.

⁶⁹ Speech of August 11, 1961. Pravda, August 12, 1961.

The fear of having ventured too far may express itself in an emphatic Bolshevik reaction against the enemy's cool affirmation that this is what has occurred. Take Khrushchev's reaction in the spring of 1960 to a speech by Douglas Dillon. "Dillon," recalls Khrushchev, "issuing, as it were, a warning about the foreign policy of the Soviet Government, announced that Khrushchev allegedly 'is walking on very thin ice.' By this he wanted to say that in his opinion the policy of the Soviet government might collapse." Here the enemy has touched a sensitive point: "I believe, and you will agree, that this concern of Mr. Dillon's on behalf of our policy is, to say the least, inappropriate. Don't worry about our policy, gentlemen; we are not walking on thin ice; we are rather standing on monolithic granite, which nobody is capable of overturning. The immovable basis of the foreign policy of the Soviet Government is...."

Frequently, Soviet denial is reinforced by projection: "And when it comes to talking about thin ice, just look at your own feet Mr. Dillon; on what are you standing? Our policy...is fated to continue to gather strength...but the policy of the United States...is doomed to ruin.... The peoples will stand up against such a policy, and that will signify its real collapse."⁷⁰ In the Bolshevik mind the retort is complete, for the dread word ("collapse") has been detached from oneself and attached to the enemy.

Contemporary Soviet leaders may be somewhat less given to anxiety than their predecessors; and the increase

⁷⁰ Speech of May 5, 1960. K 60 I, pp. 490-491.

in their resources may make this or that move to promote their international objectives appear less risky. On the other hand, there are the perils deriving from the new military technology, Moscow's chronic inferiority to Washington in the ability to deliver nuclear weapons on the opponent's territory; and the danger that an allegedly aging and dying opponent may lash out in self defense. The balance seems difficult to draw on the basis of the data considered here.

IV. RETREATING

Combating what he senses as a disposition in himself to yield, the Bolshevik leader fears provoking the enemy; fighting against this fear, he cultivates a readiness to retreat in certain unfavorable circumstances that are always difficult to define.

Retreating, Bolsheviks probably continue to believe,⁷¹ is a normal and essential activity in politics. One must be ready to pay the price of retreat, just as one does when advancing, particularly when the price is not even a temporary relinquishment of possessions long held but merely withdrawal from an advanced position recently seized -- as in the case of Cuba.

To a Bolshevik, the decision to retreat does not necessarily imply admitting that his previous conduct has been incorrect: even with a correct "line," recurrent setbacks are to be expected.

"Stubbornness," or clinging to a position from which one should retreat, is considered "bad," but one must "stubbornly" try again to advance after the retreat.

Far from entailing pure loss, retreat is an act of preservation. "In the interest of the preservation...of the great conquests of socialism," Khrushchev explains after Cuba, "we are ready to adopt, and we do adopt reasonable political compromises."⁷²

A major retreat may be a necessary condition of a major advance. "Of course the peace of Brest," Khrushchev

⁷¹Study, Chap. XIX.

⁷²Speech of December 12, 1962. Pravda, December 13, 1962.

recalls after Cuba, "was a temporary concession to German imperialism. But what was the final result? Today the banner of Marxism-Leninism flies not only over the entire territory of the Soviet Union, but...also over that of the German Democratic Republic. Those German militarists who broke into our country lie in the earth. Now you can judge who was right: Lenin, who wanted to accept the German terms, or Trotsky, who insisted that the German conditions be refused." The Leninist approach to the solution of such complicated questions triumphed.⁷³

* * * * *

There are situations in which a refusal to retreat, far from being "principled," is merely stupid. "Now let us imagine for a moment," Khrushchev proposes to the Supreme Soviet after Cuba, "what might have happened if we had adopted the line of politicians with a thick head and had refused mutual concessions."⁷⁴ Such stupidity is considered dangerous in the Bolshevik view. When one refuses to withdraw from a recent advance, though an unfavorable situation has arisen in its course, one transforms what was a required "utilization" of apparent "possibilities" into an "act of adventurism."

Not to retreat may be to "yield to provocation," a dreaded possibility.⁷⁵ Not to retreat may at the same time entail "provoking" the enemy, a grave matter but less eligible for public mention. Khrushchev may have argued for retreat in Cuba by showing that to refuse to withdraw

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Study, Chap. XII.

meant "provoking" the Strategic Air Command to a first strike. "Is it not clear," he recalls later, "that if we had taken up an uncompromising position we would merely have helped the camp of the 'mad' ones to utilize the situation so as to...unleash a world war?"⁷⁶

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Far from being selfish, retreat in the Soviet view may prove dedication: the willingness to undertake an abhorrent act for the sake of one's objectives. Far from being imposed by emotions, retreat may prove one's capacity "to take those decisions which correspond to the real situation."⁷⁷ Far from involving loss of control, retreat may facilitate perfect control.

A proper retreat is not passive, but active. According to a headline in Pravda on October 30, 1962, the Soviet Government is "decisively liquidating the danger of war." "Our country, our Party," alleges Khrushchev after Cuba, "can be proud of the results of its decisive actions in these dangerous days"⁷⁸ -- one of the many statements in which a Bolshevik leader may at the same time be lying and speaking his mind.

Instead of being due to weakness, retreat may be imposed by the "complicated nature" of a situation, and may manifest flexibility. For instance, while advancing, one must continuously examine the new situation created by the opponent's reactions. At every moment the Soviet policy-maker must determine anew whether to continue

⁷⁶Speech of December 12, 1962. Pravda, December 13, 1962.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

pressing the advance, to stop, or to retreat. All courses of action must remain open to him -- from transforming an initially limited advance into an all-out offensive to retreating behind the starting line of an advance. A petty and selfish attachment to the completion of an advance and the consolidation of gains, exactly as planned, must not become an obstacle to the achievement of ultimately even greater advances, or to a decision to withdraw should circumstances require it.

Not weakness, but high skill may be shown in a retreat; it may prove the leaders' "high political art" which enables them "to take those decisions which [etc.]." ⁷⁹

Far from being merely a response to immediate pressures, retreating may be an act of farsightedness, designed to facilitate one's future overwhelming victory. Far from favoring the enemy, a controlled retreat ensures the speediest possible annihilation of the enemy.

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"A few days ago," Krushchev recalls after Cuba, "the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Home, spoke of 'certain' indications that, after the sobering Cuban affair, the Russians might revise their role in international society; that they would begin to make concessions to NATO on all issues." However, "to such gentlemen," including, of course, Adenauer, "one can say this: perhaps you think that under pressure from you we shall undertake the obligation to remove missiles from the Soviet Union, or that we shall be frightened by threats

⁷⁹ Ibid.

of bombardment? Let me tell you straight away, gentlemen, that if you are going to base your policy on such calculations, you will miscalculate cruelly!"⁸⁰ Similarly, Khrushchev had pointed out during the Cuban crisis that it is fatal to give in to a bandit's first demand; a few days later he agreed to alongside inspection of returning missiles. To be indubitably "necessary," a retreat must be preceded by the utmost effort to avoid it; and this effort may include public statements opposed to it. Thus, one's own resolution may be enhanced and the enemy's reduced. At the same time, one has satisfied himself that every avenue of avoidance has been explored. (The point is not that intransigent words will always be followed by retreat; it is rather that they will not always be followed by uncompromising intransigence.)

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Besides not retreating needlessly, it is also important in Bolshevik thinking not to withdraw until the very moment beyond which further stubbornness would become damaging. During the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk between the Germans and the Soviet Government in the winter of early 1918 Lenin decided that "we would hold out until the Germans presented us with an ultimatum, and...when the ultimatum was presented, we would yield."⁸¹ Khrushchev may have made such a decision on October 23, 1962. Around October 26 he may have been provided with new information which, according to his decision, entailed yielding.

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⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Study, p. 497.

As the instance cited above illustrates, Lenin was rather frank about retreating. Khrushchev shares Stalin's view that most disagreeable aspects of life should never be admitted in public.⁸² Reporting on Cuba to the country, he declares loudly and long that there has been no retreat: the missiles have been removed because of the attainment of all the objectives for which they had been installed. Then he talks about something else. And then, in another context -- a discussion of "dogmatism" -- he recalls Brest-Litovsk in February 1918, the Soviet state's most flagrant retreat before that of October 1962. It is a rare thing for a Soviet leader to reminisce about Brest-Litovsk in public; it may be the first time Khrushchev has done so. And then he adds: 'The point is of course not that there is any analogy between the peace of Brest-Litovsk and the settlement of the conflict in the Caribbean Sea.'⁸³ Bolsheviks continue to lack the Western awareness that a denial may be excessive.

⁸² Ritual, passim.

⁸³ Speech of December 12, 1962. Pravda, December 13, 1962.

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